

## **Suggestions on Learning More about Nursing Home Conditions**

Whether you're a current or prospective nursing home resident, or a family member or friend of a nursing home resident, it's important to learn as much as possible about a nursing home. There are several simple ways to do this.

### **First, visit the website of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)**

(<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Home.asp>) – This federal agency, which administers both the Medicare and Medicaid programs, provides information on all 17,000 nursing homes in the United States. Using this website, you can search for any nursing home in the country – by county, city, zip code, or state. For each home, you can find information on:

- All violations cited in the nursing home's state inspection;
- A comparison between the number of violations at the facility and the average number of violations at other nursing homes in the same state;
- The number of beds and residents in the nursing home;
- Whether the nursing home accepts Medicare and/or Medicaid;
- Whether the nursing home is run by a for-profit corporation, non-profit corporation, religious organization, or government entity; and
- Characteristics about the residents in the nursing home (e.g., the number of incontinent residents, the number of residents in restraints) and how the nursing home compares to other facilities in the state.

If you don't have access to the Internet or aren't comfortable using the Internet, you can obtain this same information by calling CMS at **1-800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227)**.

If you need information about selecting or paying for a nursing home, CMS's website also has a useful pamphlet titled "Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home."

**Second, visit the nursing homes in which you are interested** – There's no substitute for actually visiting a facility, talking to residents and staff members, examining the cleanliness of the facility, and observing the interaction between residents and staff.

**Third, read the state inspection reports** – Every nursing home in the United States is inspected on average once a year. The findings of the state inspectors are contained in a detailed report, which lists all violations of government standards. You can obtain copies of these reports from two places:

- You can contact the nursing home in which you are interested. By law, all nursing homes are required to post the inspection reports in a prominent place.

- You can contact the **New York State Department of Health, New York City Office (212-613-4201)** – This office can provide you with the inspection reports for all nursing homes in the New York City area. In order to obtain a copy of an inspection report, you should call this office or send an email with your specific request to **NHINFO@health.state.ny.us**.

### **Other Sources of Information**

If you still need more information about a specific home or about paying for nursing home care, there are several other good sources of information.

- **Call the New York nursing home ombudsman (800-342-9871)** – In New York, as in all other states, there is an ombudsman who can answer questions about nursing homes or assist in resolving disputes between nursing homes and residents or family members.
- **Call or visit the website of the New York State Department of Health, New York City Office (212-613-4201) (<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/nursing/main.htm>)** – This state agency is in charge of the licensing and certification of all nursing homes in New York, including the annual inspections that are conducted of each home. On its website, you can find:
  - Information on nursing homes in the state, including survey summaries;
  - Links to other resources on the Internet; and
  - A consumer guide titled “Finding a Nursing Home in New York State.”

If you have concerns about patient care in a specific nursing home, you should call the office that handles nursing home patient care complaints (**888-201-4563**).

- **Call or visit the website of the Nursing Home Community Coalition of New York State (212-385-0355) (<http://www.nhccnys.org>)** – This local watchdog and advocacy organization works to improve nursing home care through better regulation, surveillance, and enforcement. Its website contains information about enforcement measures taken against New York nursing homes.
- **Call or visit the website of the National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (202-332-2275) (<http://www.nccnhr.org>)** – This national organization offers many publications and factsheets on the rights of nursing home residents and how family members can ensure that residents receive quality care.

*Prepared by the Minority staff of the Committee on Government Reform*